

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE B-11

WASHINGTON POST
10 August 1984

JACK ANDERSON

In Beirut, PLO Is Moving Back Its Old Forces

The State Department recently stunned Congress by claiming that Syria was now playing a "helpful" role in Lebanon. This abrupt reversal of the official attitude toward Syria was unveiled by Richard Murphy, the assistant secretary for Middle Eastern affairs. "Times change," he explained.

This is certainly true, but not in the sense Murphy implied. The biggest change in Lebanon is that the Palestine Liberation Organization, driven out of Beirut by the Israelis two years ago, is quietly moving back into Lebanon in strength.

"In fact," a confidential intelligence report warns, "the reconstruction of a Palestinian state within Lebanon today is only a question of time."

The report, obtained by my associate Donald Goldberg, declares: "Beirut is once again witnessing the systematic return of the armed Palestinian organizations . . . supported both by Syria and Lebanese organizations. Lebanese security sources expect this PLO influx to develop very quickly into a massive return of the entire PLO infrastructure to the capital of Lebanon with renewed PLO activity to the polit-

ical, financial, military and propaganda fields."

This means that the Israeli invasion and the subsequent sacrifice of 241 U.S. servicemen at the Beirut airport last fall were for nought. Lebanon soon will be in the same chaotic condition it was in before the last two years of bloodshed: a state powerless to control a quarrelsome, heavily armed alien population within its borders.

In fact, the significant difference is that now the warring Palestinian factions will almost certainly be the surrogates of Syrian President Hafez Assad. In that respect, times have changed for the worse.

"The return of the PLO to Beirut will be a major success for Syria, given the fact that most of the PLO organizations are today to some extent under Syrian control," the intelligence report explains. It adds:

"With this new situation, Assad can prove again and again that he is the needed leader in the Middle East who can bring events under control, and that foreign powers should address him and discuss with him the situation in Lebanon, the future of the Palestinians and an overall peace in the Middle East."

The report adds this warning: "Given the ties between the PLO and international terrorism, one could expect that the areas under PLO control in Lebanon would once again be used as bases for international terrorist activity."

Here is some of the evidence of the PLO's resurgence cited in the report:

- Fatah, the group loyal to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, resumed its activities in Tripoli and Beirut early this year, sending arms and money to the secret cadres left behind last summer. Known members of Fatah and its covert action arm, the 17th Brigade, have been spotted arriving in Beirut in recent months.

- On June 13, a high-level "command" meeting among leading dissident PLO members, including Abu Moussa, agreed on the return of armed Palestinians to West Beirut. Two platoons were promptly dispatched.

- The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command, a group with close Soviet and Syrian ties, recently began recruiting efforts in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. On June 9, representatives of the general command, other PLO groups and Druse factions met to plan a major military action in Beirut.

- On May 8, a company of 200 Saiqa soldiers, Palestinians trained, equipped and commanded by Syrian army officers, entered West Beirut and deployed along the coast. Military cells were set up, and an official of the Women's League of Saiqa went into the refugee camps to recruit Palestinian women.